In Gesture the Meaning of Life

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ON GETTING THE MOST OUT OF LIFE.

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Matt. 16: What profit will it be when a man gains the whole world and forfeits his own soul?

INTRO. The reopening of the schools again brings to our attention the thousands of young minds, directed and directing, in their preparation for careers that shall determine what their whole lives shall be. What shall they be? What will they amount to? What is the chief end of man, educationally speaking? economically speaking? religiously speaking?

Forever pursuing with such incessant, restless striving; forever coming and going, unceasingly seeking- what is it that man wants? Of course, if you ask the candidates for office what they want, their answer is in no doubt whatever-they want to be elected! But what of our days and years from agonizing birth and perplexing youth thru struggling maturity into helpless old age? What of the broken tortures of our spirits in love and hate, in quarrels and agreements, in evils and good- what have we been pursuing thru all our days and years?

Life is so complex and diversified that man can strive for most anything and get something out of it. He can seek and find plenty of thrills and excitement, he can build for himself a reputation and a name, he can gain vast wealth and basque in easy and comfort, he can centralize himself in power and wield it in influence over others, he can reach the pinnacles of achievement and shine forth above all others; yes, and he can feel amply repaid for the meager returns of fame and fortune. And yet, ~~and yet~~, man at his best repudiates these very things that the world sets up for standard!

Matt 16:26

Let us turn to the world's best man and see what light Jesus throws upon our question? "What profit will it be when a man gains the whole world and forfeits his own soul?" By this question Jesus answers ours in the negative. Here is his negative answer as a statement-"A man's life consists not in the abundance of the things he possesses."

Strangely startling is the fact, when one stops to think, that the one man out of the whole New Testament whom the 20th century chose to imitate is the man who built for himself bigger and better barns and whom Jesus calls a fool!

The temptations of Jesus add further to the negative answer of Jesus. Food, wealth, worldly position are not the plans of God for His children, but a spiritual life in which character is supreme. Not by any supernatural exercise of force or by any apocolyptic action of God, but by true faith and co-operation with God is the world's salvation to be accomplished. Nor is the kingdom of God to come thru any compromise with worldly powers or standards, but by unswerving loyalty to God's purpose for mankind.

For the Master's positive answer to our ? let us glance at the life of Jesus and consider briefly his personal religion. or rather, his personal spiritual outlook upon Life.

I. The significance of Jesus in the light of his Life and vocation.

1. Jesus was a Jew, brot up according to Jewish tradition, custom and belief. He was raised on Jewish prejudices and Jewish hopes. He was taught the Jewish standards of living.

2. Jesus was a carpenter by trade, taught by his father in the use of all the carpenter's tools and arts. Some believe that when his father passed, Jesus helped to support the family as a carpenter.

3. But when Jesus died, he was no longer thot of as a Jew and had long since been forgotten as a carpenter. He became the founder of what we call the Christian religion. He has been made the pivot around which all history dates its events. He has long been and still is recognized as the greatest and most unique personality that has ever lived. Our worship of him as the Son of God and our theology in regard to him does not explain him, nor reveal the secret of his insight to Life. Jesus became what he did as the outgrowth of his sense of God. To Jesus, God was always his Heavenly Father and not thru any philosophical notion about the relation of his inner nature to the unseen creative Spirit of the universe.

Jesus simply saw signs everywhere- in nature, in his social environment, in his own moral judgments, and in his deepest experiences of prayer and worship- that God loved him, thot of him and guided his unfolding life, in the way a father loves and thinks for and guides his child. To be God's son meant, to Jesus, to respond affectionately and obediently to God's fatherly interest in him. As a child depends hpon his father so Jesus depended upon God. As a child looks up to and loves his father, so Jesus loved and looked up to God. As a child obeys his father's loving commandments and, as he grows up, enters with intelligent sympathy into his father's plans, so Jesus obeyed and co-operated with God. He lived the life of God's son.

Living thus, he learned that all men were God's sons, but they did not ~~not~~ live up to their high privilege of loving, trusting, and working with God as ~~Jesus~~ he did. Hence it became the deepest wish of his heart that they might learn so to live. Only so could they find the deepest satisfactions and the highest joys of living. It was this ~~longing~~ sense of God and this longing of his very soul that took him beyond Judiasm and made of him more than a mere carpenter. Thru sympathetic appreciation, Jesus developed his understanding of God and of the whole creation of God, and thru his sense of moral obligation in the light of his appreciation ~~Jesus~~ Jesus gave his life to the world that all humanity might learn how to live, each son of God living at his highest and best.

II. If the world's estimation of Jesus Christ is correct, ought we not do more than just worship him? Ought we not also to sit at his feet and learn of the Master Teacher how to enter into Life as he did, thru appreciation, and how to lose our lives, to let them go in the direction of the greatest good to all?

1. Appreciation means accurate perception and true estimation, due recognition of worth, a sympathetic insight. Thru appreciation we learn to know life's supreme values and how to use them.

Education is largely a matter of awakening in our boys and girls a sense of appreciation for that which is factual, real and true, of that which isright and just, of that which is beautiful and good and wholesome.

All of our contacts with others, thru dealings, friendhhips and loves are opportunities afforded us to increase our appreciation of the finer things of life.

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The supreme appreciation, in my humble estimation, is that of Jesus for his Heavenly Father who expresses himself in every work of creation, in all peoples of the world and in all conditions and situations. Such an appreciation makes for universal peace and good will, transforming enemies into friends and giving to life a motive and an objective worthy of our highest and best efforts.

2. True appreciation leads to a sense of responsibility. The world's highest values are the property of no man. They belong to God, the creator of them, and they are given to his children of earth to be rightly used. Truth, Reality, Goodness, Beauty, Love are universal- they are for all of God's children of earth.

Esoteric knowledge is a misnomer. No man has a right to hide the truth under a bushel. Hidden truth loses its light and becomes darkness. The Gospel truth is not the possession of Christians. Unless Christians share the Gospel truth with the whole wide world, they will lose it.

Jesus did'nt teach his disciples to keep his truth to themselves, but commanded them to go into all the world and let his light shine. Furthermore, he told them that they would be persecuted and be made to suffer and die in their effort to spread the Gospel. We are not called to a life of ease and security, we are called to a service of sharing with others the truth God gives to us. To this end Jesus gave his own life. Can we do less?

CONCLUSION:-

Is not all this a challenge to our present age? To go beyond provincialism and prejudice, beyond nationalism and race, beyond selfishness and greed and enmity and wars, beyond our local affairs and sectarian interests, beyond indifference and the status quo to a Christlike appreciation of God and of one another until civilization shall be Christianized and all mankind become citizens of God's kingdom on earth?